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RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHMOS
DE RUEHGB #1779/01 1490412
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 290412Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4729
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001779

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2016

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SUBJECT: DANISH PRIME MINISTER COMMITTED TO IRAQ

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ZALMAY KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4 (A), (B), AND (D).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: On May 24, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Danish Defense Minister Soren Gade called on the Ambassador and GEN Casey. Rasmussen reported that the Danish Parliament is expected to vote next week to extend and adjust its military presence in Iraq through July 7, 2007. He also expressed satisfaction with his earlier meetings that day with Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki, President Talibani, and Council of Representative Speaker Mashhadani. Rasmussen took this opportunity to probe Ambassador and GEN Casey on security transfer "timetables," Iranian influence, and the likelihood for increased fundamentalism in Iraq. END SUMMARY.

Danish Security Footprint Plan for 2007

¶12. (C) Rasmussen opened the session by stating that it is likely his government will vote "yes" next week to extend and adjust its troop mandate for service in Iraq through July 7, 2007. The modified mandate would reduce the number of Danish ground troops in Basrah by 80 (leaving about 400 Danish soldiers) and increase the Danish military contingent supporting UNAMI in Baghdad from the current five to approximately 30. The mandate also includes the provision of a dedicated C-130 aircraft with flight and ground crew for the UNAMI mission, which would be based in Amman. Rasmussen also pointed out that his government will participate in the British-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT).

Iraq Government Priorities

¶13. (C) Rasmussen expressed satisfaction with his meetings with PM Maliki, President Talibani, and Parliament Speaker Mashhadani. He noted that they all seem to agree that the top government priorities are improving security, delivering essential services, and addressing ethno-sectarian violence. The Ambassador stressed that another objective of these leaders is to fill the critical posts of Defense Minister, Interior Minister, and Minister of State for National Security Affairs with independent, capable leaders as soon as possible.

¶14. (C) Rasmussen expressed confidence in the new government and agreed with the Ambassador's statement that, in order to win over the people and restore their confidence in the state of Iraq, this government must demonstrate concrete improvement in the next few months. GEN Casey pointed out that in terms of security, the focus for improvement must be Baghdad, for which Maliki and others have a strategy for implementation. GEN Casey cautioned that security

improvements should not be expected for at least a month, as the terrorists are putting great efforts into perpetuating violence during this time of transition.

Security Transfer Timetable

15. (C) Rasmussen questioned whether the Iraqis are serious about having a "timetable" for the transfer of security as mentioned by Maliki to British Prime Minister Tony Blair. GEN Casey responded that there is not -- and should not -- be a detailed timetable for transfer of security but rather a conditions-based process that is subject to change. GEN Casey went on to stress that, based on the most recent assessment conducted by the Coalition and Iraqis, it appears that transfer of security could occur in seven or eight of the provinces by the end of the year and that within 18-24 months Iraqi Security Forces should be able to operate with minimal Coalition Force support.

Iranian influence

16. (C) Rasmussen was interested in the growing Iranian influence in Iraq, which the Ambassador stated is strong now. Although the USG welcomes a solid Iraq-Iran relationship (particularly in areas such as diplomacy, trade, and border control), we cannot accept the negative influence, Ambassador said. Allowing weapons, money, and terrorists to flow in and out of Iraq from Iran must be stopped. GEN Casey added that Iranians increasingly are responsible for the shipments of IEDs, bombmaking components, and other weapons to Shia extremists interested in killing Coalition Forces. Casey

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also noted that Iranians are sponsoring offensive training for Shia extremists and militias both inside Iraq and abroad.

The Rise of Extremism in Iraq

17. (C) Rasmussen expressed concern with growing extremism in Iraq and emphasized that the international community must apply its "soft power" for years to come to ensure against radicalism. As Coalition countries withdraw their forces, Rasmussen continued, they should maintain their political presence and continue to contribute to socio-economic development. The Ambassador agreed, stating that deterring extremism in Iraq and throughout the region will be the defining challenge of our time. The Ambassador stressed that although Iraq has a history of secularism, there is a strong and influential religious network between Iran and Iraq that cannot be underestimated; the international community must work to contain or reverse Iranian influence. This will not be easy, and to illustrate this point the Ambassador pointed out that Iran gives up to 6,000 scholarships a year to young Iranian men to study in Najaf.

KHALILZAD